

SPECIAL PROJECTS

PRESS RELEASE, 19 October 2016

BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP

Special Projects' 'NEW OLD: Designing for our Future Selves' exhibit is a real conversation starter

What is the most valuable thing you have learned so far?

What was the biggest mistake you've ever made?

Is it true that people don't grow up?



On **12 January 2017**, design and invention agency **Special Projects** unveils Exchange, an interactive installation at the **Design Museum** designed to spark human connection and foster intergenerational understanding.

In 1986, **Jeremy Myerson**, co-founder of the **RCA Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design**, attended 'New Design for Old' at the Victoria & Albert Museum's Boilerhouse space, where a select group of the world's most esteemed designers presented their ideas on redeveloping everyday objects to meet the needs of older people. That exhibition had a lasting impact on design thinking in Britain, and led to the RCA founding a dedicated research centre into design for ageing populations.

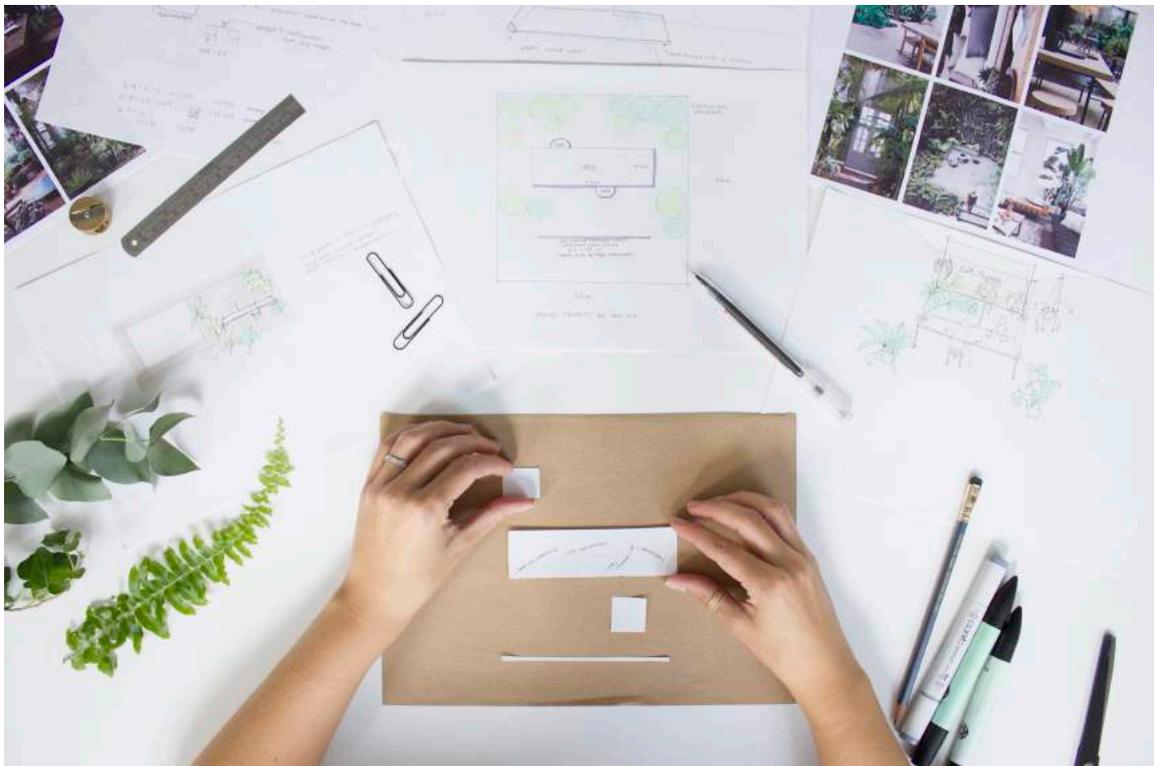
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Now, 30 years after the ground-breaking exhibition, Myerson is back at the helm of its sequel '**NEW OLD: Designing for our Future Selves**', which is showing at the freshly relocated **Design Museum** on Kensington High Street from **12 January to 19 February**.

Myerson's brief is broader in scope than its predecessor's. The exhibition does not confine itself to product design, but encompasses the wider possibilities of employing design thinking to help people live fuller, healthier and more rewarding lives as they move into old age. It looks at all aspects of ageing and its impact on human life, with themes including community, working, home, mobility and identity.

That's where **Special Projects** come in.



Alongside a hand-picked group of leading designers commissioned to contribute – including the likes of **IDEO, PriestmanGoode, Industrial Facility, Yves Béhar** and **Konstantin Grcic** – agency founders Clara Gaggero Westaway and Adrian Westaway have been invited to create a piece for the 'Identity' strand of the exhibition that breaks down prejudice and overcomes the stigmas attached to ageing.

Acting on the simple premise that the most effective means of overturning preconceptions is direct personal experience, **Special Projects** are building an installation that places the individual at its heart. In a homey, natural and relaxing space, replete with potted flora, an older person sits at a custom-built table, topped with a paper surface that participants can write upon. The success of the exhibit depends upon members of the public acting upon the invitation to step forward and ask the person a question. It could be anything:

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'What made you happiest in life?'

'What's the most valuable thing you've learned?'

'What's the best age to be?'

'Do the young of today have it easy?'

'Do you feel in control of your destiny?'

The paper-topped table allows the public to write down their questions, emboldening them to interact and creating a physical legacy of the exchange, with the table itself acting as a physical bridge between the participants. In response, the older participant will ask a question in turn, creating a dialogue and a moment of intergenerational connection that all too rarely occurs in everyday life, enlightening and enriching both parties in the exchange.



*'There is so much stigma around ageing and, as designers, the only way to overcome it is to deeply understand the people you are designing for. For **NEW OLD** we've tried to let the audience jump into a part of our process by letting them literally spend time with a range of amazing older adults to discover what ageing means for themselves.'*

Adrian Westaway, Co-founder, Special Projects

As a user-centric design agency, **Special Projects** places direct-contact research and personal engagement at the heart of its work. The installation is effectively an embodiment of this process,

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reflecting the fact that it is only by listening to the needs and experiences of the people it targets that design can hope to improve their lives.

Although known for their technological innovation and futures-orientated commissions, Special Projects aren't afraid to take an analogue approach when the challenge requires it.

Already winners of the **IXDA** and **IDEA** Awards for their 'Out of the Box' project for Samsung – which drew upon immersive analogue-learning logic to instruct older phone users in how to prepare and use their devices and is also featured in the exhibition – Special Projects are perfectly placed to explore ways in which effective communication can help overcome the stereotypes and stigmas associated with ageing.

By creating a delightful, inclusive space for intimate cross-generational conversation, where both participants are equally engaged and invested in the exchange of experiences, Special Projects urge us to expand our own frame of reference about what ageing is today and what it might become in future.



'**NEW OLD: Designing for our Future Selves**' is accompanied by a public outreach programme, exhibition publication and an associated national opinion survey on ageing. It is supported by research and demographic data from the Oxford Institute for Population Ageing at the University of Oxford, where Jeremy Myerson is a visiting fellow.

The exhibition will **tour internationally** after its Design Museum run.

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For more information about 'Exchange', interviews with Adrian or Clara, and images of the exhibit, please contact Jodi Moss at jodi@zetteler.co.uk or on 07910 705147.

Notes for Editors

NEW OLD: Designing for our Future Selves
12 January to 19 February 2017

Design Museum
224–238 Kensington High Street
London
W8 6AG

designmuseum.org

About Special Projects

Founded by Clara Gaggero-Westaway and Adrian Westaway, Special Projects combines the principles of user-centric design, an unfettered understanding of technological possibility and the surprise of a magician's performance to create products and inventions that delight the user and radiate positivity.

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Working with international brands such as Google, Samsung and P&G, they have earned multiple design awards for their digital/physical crossover projects including their Lego-based time-management tool, Bit Planner; their Out of the Box interactive smartphone manuals for the elderly; and their empathetic, Red Dot-winning weighing scales.

specialprojects.studio

Twitter/Instagram: @special_proj

About Design Museum

The Design Museum is building the world's leading museum devoted to architecture and design, its work encompasses all elements of design, including fashion, product and graphic design. Since it opened its doors in 1989 the museum has displayed everything from an AK-47 to high heels designed by Christian Louboutin. It has staged over 100 exhibitions, welcomed over five million visitors and showcased the work of some of the world's most celebrated designers and architects including Paul Smith, Zaha Hadid, Jonathan Ive, Miuccia Prada, Frank Gehry, Eileen Gray and Dieter Rams. The Design Museum is relocating to a 1960s building in Kensington, west London. The Design Museum will reopen on 24 November 2016. Leading architectural designer John Pawson has converted the interior of the building to create a new home for the Design Museum giving it three times more space in which to show a wider range of exhibitions and significantly extend its learning programme.

designmuseum.org | newdesignmuseum.tumblr.com

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